



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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U.S. CHARGES FORMER WESTCHESTER COUNTY JAIL GUARD
WITH VIOLATING CIVIL RIGHTS OF INMATE

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that PAUL M. COTÉ, a former Corrections Officer previously employed by the Westchester County Department of Correction, has been charged in an Indictment with violating the civil rights of Zoran Teodorovic, an inmate at the Correctional facility in Valhalla, New York, by using excessive force against that inmate. Zoran Teodorovic, who was 46 at the time of the incident in 2000, suffered brain trauma as a result of the assault, survived in a persistent vegetative state for fourteen months, and then died.

COTÉ was employed as a Correction Officer at the Westchester County Department of Correction in Valhalla, New York, and the Indictment charges that, on or about October 10, 2000, COTÉ struck, kicked, stomped, and assaulted Zoran Teodorovic, a pre-trial detainee at the facility, while Teodorovic was restrained and under the physical control of another Correction Officer. If convicted, COTÉ faces a maximum penalty of ten years in prison. COTÉ is scheduled to appear on February 15, 2006, for an arraignment in White Plains federal court, where the indictment was returned.

COTÉ, 39, lives in Mahopac, New York.

In July 2001, a jury in New York State Supreme Court, Westchester County, convicted COTÉ of assault in the second degree, a felony, based on the same conduct that gives rise to the instant federal civil rights charge. On September 28, 2001, New York State Supreme Court Justice John M. Perone sentenced COTÉ to three months incarceration and one hundred hours of community service. Subsequently, on December 21, 2001, Teodorovic died as a result of the injuries he sustained on October 10, 2000.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation on this case.

Assistant United States Attorneys CYNTHIA K. DUNNE and ANDREW W. SCHILLING are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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